

EXHIBIT A

The Detroit News

OAKLAND COUNTY

Long-running fight over mosque in Troy may be nearing resolution



Oralandar Brand-Williams

The Detroit News

Published 4:32 p.m. ET March 22, 2022 | Updated 5:54 p.m. ET March 22, 2022

A federal judge has cleared the way for the first mosque to be built in Troy.

The decision by U.S. District Judge Nancy Edmunds follows a decade-long fight and four-year legal battle over plans to build a mosque inside the Adam Community Center on Rochester Road about three-quarters of a mile south of Wattles Road.

Edmunds, who ruled Friday in a lawsuit filed by the U.S. Department of Justice against Troy, said the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act is intended to protect organizations like the Adams Community Center from discrimination in zoning laws that "lurks behind such vague and universally applicable reasons as traffic, aesthetics, or 'not consistent with the city's land use plan.'"

Edmunds added, "Troy argues that Adam was not discriminated against based on its Muslim faith, but otherwise makes no effort to rebut the Government's case by asserting a compelling interest or disputing that it had less restrictive means."

The nonprofit Adam Community Center sued the Troy city council, planning commission and members of the zoning board of appeals in 2018 after trying unsuccessfully to build a community center in the city, which at the time had approximately 53 places of worship within its 33.6-square-mile border but not one for Muslims, according to the Michigan chapter of Council on American-Islamic Relations. Michigan chapter of Council on American-Islamic Relations also sued in 2018.

The federal government filed a lawsuit against Troy in 2019, arguing Troy violated federal law for religious land use when it denied zoning approval for a mosque.

Edmunds also prohibited the city or its officials from treating places of worship differently than it does other groups under its zoning rules.

Troy City Attorney Lori Bluhm said Tuesday in an email that "The City is evaluating its options regarding the US Department of Justice v. Troy lawsuit opinion, which may include an appeal."

Troy Mayor Ethan Baker wrote on Facebook Tuesday, "At this point, the City is reviewing its options and may pursue an appeal of the Court's decision, since it has a good faith belief that there were errors leading to the adverse decision."

"I also wanted to clarify that the City has never been opposed to having a mosque or any other place of worship in the City," Baker added. "Instead, the City's focus is to uphold the decision of its Zoning Board of Appeals, which denied seven variance requests which were required in order to use the Rochester Road location for a place of worship."

Baker said Troy's zoning ordinance "allows for places of worship to be located in almost every area of the City, but does impose some restrictions designed to protect neighboring property owners and to avoid congestion on public streets and provide safe and convenient access to and from the property."

Dawud Walid, executive director for CAIR-MI, said Tuesday he is hopeful that his organization's lawsuit can be resolved now as a result of Edmunds' ruling. "The city of Troy touts itself as being diverse and inclusive. It's time for Troy to have a mosque."

Walid said the estimated 4,000 Muslims living in Troy "deserve to have a place of worship."

People in Troy are driving to Warren and sterling heights or to Rochester Hills to worship, said Walid.

Dr. Nural Amin, the president of the Adam Community Center, said Tuesday he is happy that the battle to bring a mosque to Troy appears to be nearing an end.

There are about 500 members of the mosque, which is going to be called the Adam Community Center First Masjid of Troy, Amin said.

"It's a blessing for us," said Amin. "Children need a place of worship. We need to teach our children our culture ... our religion."

Amin said the mosque will also benefit elderly residents and those with physical disabilities who are not able to travel outside Troy to attend a mosque.

Amy Doukoure, the staff attorney for CAIR-MI, said Tuesday the organization's lawsuit remains active but that she is hopeful Edmunds' ruling "opens an avenue for resolution" of

their lawsuit soon so that Troy Muslims can observe the 30-day Muslim holiday of Ramadan, which is expected to begin around April 1 inside their new mosque at the Adam Community Center.

Edmunds has scheduled a settlement conference before a federal magistrate between CAIR-MI and Troy's attorneys for 10:30 a.m. on April 18 via Zoom, said Doukoure.

2:24



Mayor Ethan Baker
3,504 Tweets

- Tweets
- Tweets & replies
- Media
- Likes



Mayor Ethan Baker @EthanB... · 3/22/22 ...

Federal judge rules against Troy's effort to block mosque from opening [#TroyMI](#)

[freep.com/story/news/loc...](#)

Unfortunately, the news media and press releases do not clarify that this is still pending litigation, because the companion case, where there is a request for significant money damages, has not yet been decided. At this point, the City is reviewing its options and may pursue an appeal of the Court's decision, since it has a good faith belief that there were errors leading to the adverse decision.

I also wanted to clarify that the City has never been opposed to having a mosque or any other place of worship in the City. Instead, the City's focus is to uphold the decision of its Zoning Board of Appeals, which denied seven variance requests which were required in order to use the Rochester Road location for a place of worship. The City of Troy's zoning ordinance allows for places of worship to be located in almost every area of the City, but does impose some restrictions designed to protect neighboring property owners and to avoid congestion on public streets and provide safe and convenient access to and from the property. Contrary to the implications in the Court's decision, these are not vague restrictions designed to exclude places of worship but instead are designed to protect the safety of the general public and very similar regulations are

3

3



Mayor Ethan Baker @EthanB... · 3/21/22 ...

The 5th graders in Mrs. Morrow's class at Morse Elementary are smart and fun! Thank you for having me today to read for [#MarchIsReadingMonth!](#) [#TroyMI](#) [#MIRPM](#)

